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HOW TO BE HAPPY.

'GIVE us, O give us the man who sings at his work,' says Carlyle. 'Be his occupation what it may, he is equal to any of those who follow the same pursuit in silent sullenness. He will do more in the same time—he will do it better—he will persevere longer. Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness, altogether past calculation its powers of endurance. Efforts to be permanently useful, must be uniformly joyous—a spirit all sunshine—graceful from very gladness—beautiful because bright.' It is the old story :

A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a !

It is easy enough to have this 'merry heart' when all goes well. But to keep it through all the ups and downs of this changeable world—that is the triumph. Yet our happiness is greatly in our own hands : and on the cultivation of the cheery spirit depends our usefulness to others.

But troubles are so heavy, some will say ; it is impossible to keep up. Even so ; let them lay us down, let them flatten us out like the grass under a garden roller. We can stand up afterwards humbly, as the grass does, and make the world fresher and brighter that we are still alive.

About being killed by troubles, old Dr Johnson once said a queer thing. He heard of Lady Somebody-or-other who was left a widow and died of a broken heart ; and he said if she had been a poor woman with nine children she would have been still alive. The case would have been worse, but the end would have been better. He knew enough of human nature to know that occupation is strength, and that we shall outlive Fortune's worst if we live for others.

We are dealing, however, not with great griefs, which must have their season, but with human unhappiness in general. It is neither affliction nor hardship that keeps most men and women unhappy. The game is not worth the candle, they say, when nothing troubles them except the

burden of themselves. The cultured ask, 'Is life worth living?' The rich and educated have imported the word *ennui* for their own exclusive use. Edwin has no misfortune to bear when he is in 'the blues,' what Angelina calls 'the dumps' is a malady without known cause. The same Angelina's father has a balance at his banker's, when he feels life a bore ; and Angelina's mother has all she can wish for, when she is 'so low to-day.' To some people, as to the poet Cowper, it becomes a lifelong affliction to have no joy. Intellectual men are specially subject to it ; hence the ravings of the poets—which they might well have spared the world. Sensitive, highly strung, nervous natures, with the greatest capacity for happiness, have also the keenest sense of the want of it. Even the power of amusing others seems to be no safeguard for a man's own cheerfulness. We all know the story of the doctor advising his patient to cheer himself up by going to see Grimaldi the clown, and the patient saying : 'Sir, I am that unhappy man.'

The close union of mind and body is shown above all things in this—that sadness may be caused by disease, but it may also produce several different diseases. Illness and melancholy seem to work in a circle. It is the doctor's best hope that his patient will make a mechanical effort of cheerfulness and courage, and then in many cases of illness the charmed circle is broken, health returns, and the cheerfulness that was assumed soon becomes real and true by habit. Mark Tapley, we may be sure, did not suffer from 'nerves,' and very few people do, who have formed the custom of looking at the bright side of everything and despising small worries. On the other hand, a healthy cheerfulness is more difficult for some men than for others. *Punch* was right in answering, 'Is life worth living?' by saying it depended on the liver—a pun perfect enough to make Charles Lamb turn in his grave.

But suppose there is health and still not happiness, what are we to think—dealing as we are, all the time, with the discontent of those who are free from acute discomfort—the form of

unhappiness that overclouds countless lives? We are to think simply that they have not learned how to be happy.

It does not depend on the wisdom of books; it is a practical matter, of which learned men are often profoundly ignorant. In what the boys call a stiff exam., with happiness for the subject, the great thinkers would nearly all be plucked. Carlyle said some good things about it, but gave no recipe for making it. He said that if the nations combined to make one shoebblack happy, they would fail; for if they gave him half the world, he would begin to want the other half. He said likewise, that if but one precious thing were taken away from what we possess, we should know *then* how happy we had been. But all the same he did not tell us how to be happy. Matthew Arnold defined happiness as a sense of hitting the mark; but where is the mark all along life's way, and how are we to hit it? Another great thinker said he despaired of being happy since 'there is no happiness for the gifted.' The lament reminds one of the comic woodcut of the 'sensitive plant'—the Professor at the piano weeping over his own music, while the company sit waiting for him to go on. The 'gifted' thinker argued that happiness diminishes as intelligence increases: that the cow in the meadow may be happy, but not the man. This theory is a favourite one because it is flattering; but it is forgotten that the highest capacity for pain is also the highest capacity for enjoyment. The cow in the field can eat grass and lie upon it, and feel the freshness of the day, and there its comfort ends. But who can count or measure the variety of joys any one of us thankless mortals has already received? Who can describe our capacity for happiness? As the starlit heavens are to our finite vision, it seems to go very near the infinite.

Ah! say the thinkers of discontented thoughts, that is precisely the reason why we suffer. The cattle know of no pleasure beyond eating grass; but we are conscious of an infinite craving. The more we have, if we get but leisure to rest and reflect, the greater is our hunger. When we toil up mountains from summit to summit, there is always a higher summit that no man has trod, and we are not one inch nearer its mists and clouds. Even when we make our home, and kindle fire upon the hearth, and gather our unbroken circle round it, there is a sense of incompleteness. There is a nameless, formless Something wanting, which cannot be got for love or money, nor for toil and time and tears.

Certainly, this is true. The infinite craving is the promise of our immortality. We should not wish to lose it. As George MacDonald has beautifully put it, there will yet come a moment of surprised recognition in which we shall exclaim: '*This was what it meant.*'

Still, though perfect happiness is not meant for

us here, we were meant to be far happier than we let ourselves be. As Mrs Browning has it:

Methinks we do as fretful children do,
Leaning their faces on the window-pane,
To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,
And shut the sky and landscape from their view.

We all have our own sky and landscape, if we will not fret to see something else. In Mr Ruskin's newly edited *Christ's Folk in the Apennine*, there is a beautiful thought by a peasant. This Tuscan countrywoman said there was no reason why each of us should not have *two paradises*—one in this world, and one in the next; and 'as for myself,' she added, 'I trust in my Lord about everything, and I think that is why I get on so well.' In a word, because we cannot have the perfection of happiness, there is no reason why we should not be patiently happy each in our place, a light and a strength and a pleasure to the corners of the world where our lot is cast.

But how? comes the repeated question. Oh that there were some recipe for happiness in the Household books! There is 'How to make Claret-cup' and 'How to remove Stains from Marble'; but not that simplest most necessary recipe, 'How to be Happy.'

The best directions would be: 'Keep an even mind, and carry about with you the philosopher's stone (or the modern equivalent for it) to turn common things to gold.' This needs an explanation, or it might be like a certain recipe which is of no use to the public, because it begins by requiring 'crumbublions' of a fine purple colour.

Evenness of mind, to the sensitive nervous temperament, depends very much upon order. Regular hours of rising and of sleep: a certain broad order of duties in the day, to prevent hurry, and to give the sense of rest that comes of duty done—not many things undertaken, but few and finished; this is part of the self-discipline that contentment depends on. Secondly, beside order of time, visible order is a great help—neatness of person, and a home with the proverbial 'place for everything and everything in its place,' or rather restored to its place on the old-fashioned principle of clearing as we go. Visible order in its highest degree becomes visible beauty—the home full of brightness and good taste, the face and dress and bearing as pleasing as care can make them. All this outward order is a tonic for the mind. Thirdly, if we do not cultivate the power of silence at need, our edifice of happiness—the work of many days, built up to shelter ourselves and others—may all fall down in one hour. There must be in our recipe, added to the ingredients already stated, a small quantity of self-control in temper. The habit of cheerfulness will in time create a good temper; and, strangely enough, an honest pretence to be cheerful produces cheerfulness perfectly genuine. Lastly, look to what we have, not to what we have not; and let not trifles vex and sadden us, since our heart is made for greater things.

This closes the popular recipe for keeping an even mind ; but to be happy is something still beyond. Where, then, is the philosopher's stone, that turns common things to gold ? Where is the mark we can always hit, if happiness be the sense of hitting the mark ?

Any observant man or woman must have noticed that the pursuit of one's own pleasure makes one hunger more and more, and become less hardy, more dependent on circumstance. We must all have noticed, too, that in the worst dejection nothing roused soul and body so quickly as to do—not to say, but to do—something for another. Here, then, is the secret ; here is the philosopher's stone that can fill the most unpromising path with gold. If we try to satisfy ourselves, we shall fail. If we seek our joy in others, we shall infallibly succeed ; continually we can find something to do for their welfare or comfort, or pleasure or success—not in great things, perhaps, but in the details of every day. Herein is the straight road to being happy 'under all circumstances ;' herein is hinted why Johnson's poor widow would not die. As a matter of fact, the secret works so well in many lives around us, that one might say, in a paradox, that active unselfishness seems like the last refinement of self-love. One might say so—in haste and ignorance ; but one does not. For even if there be alloy in the gold, we are thankful to the weak and human hands that do their best to make and give it. For them, there is no earthly occupation so happy, and their happiness means health and energy, and the power of being generous at need.

MR ESHOLT'S YOUNG WIFE.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By T. W. SPEIGHT.

CHAPTER VIII.

WILMOT saw that he was on the wrong tack, so he determined to try another. He stood confronting Agnes, his face towards the entrance to the path, so that he could see any one the moment they turned the corner. 'No ; it is not all that I have to say,' he went on with well-simulated passion and vehemence. 'When last I bade you farewell on that moonlight night which can never be forgotten by me, you told me that you loved me, and that you would be faithful to me, even though we might not be able to marry for years to come. I went, cherishing your image in my heart as that of my future wife. One or two letters I received from you ; then came a long silence, which I was utterly at a loss to understand. When I returned to England, I found that your father was dead, and that you and your aunt had vanished no one knew whither. Everywhere I sought you, but in vain. Your concealment was very cleverly contrived, Mrs Esholt ; I give you credit for that much. At last, by accident, our paths cross, and I find you—the wife of another ! Now, I ask you, I demand of you, why you broke your faith with me ? What had I done to be treated as you have treated me ? Why

did you not write to me and tell me that you wished our engagement broken off, instead of leading me on in a fool's chase after a shadow ? These are questions, Mrs Esholt, which I shall feel obliged by your answering.'

He acted the part of a wronged and indignant lover to perfection, and now stood with folded arms, his cheeks slightly flushed, in his dark flashing eyes an expression half made up of just resentment and half of the love he could not forget. He certainly looked very handsome : on that point every one would have been agreed.

The attack was so unexpected that Agnes knew not what to reply. Women are credulous where their affections are concerned ; his impassioned manner and the earnestness of his voice wholly imposed upon her. He turned and went slowly along the walk ; no one was yet in sight. Mechanically, Agnes followed him.

'I wrote you three letters,' she said in a voice half choked with emotion ; 'and as soon as my aunt and I were settled in Liverpool, I at once sent you our new address.'

'I trust you will believe me,' he said impressively, but with a certain sadness in his voice, 'when I tell you that I never received any of the letters in question. But that perhaps was scarcely to be wondered at. We were trading up and down the coast, calling at various ports, but never stopping long at any of them. The other fellows on board were no more fortunate than I was as regards their letters from home.'

'They told Aunt Maria at the office that the letter she left there had been duly given into your hands, and if so—'

'Whoever told her so, lied !' broke in Wilmot vehemently. 'I give you my word of honour that no such letter ever reached me.'

'Even in that case, if you had written to Mr Ludford, he would at once have furnished you with our address.'

'Mr Ludford ! I had almost forgotten the existence of such a person. I never saw him but once, and then only for half an hour. I knew no more where to find him than the man in the moon.'

There was not the slightest reason why Agnes should doubt the truth of what he had just told her. Never had she found him out in a lie or the semblance of one ; why should she doubt him now ? Her soul within her shivered as she listened to his words. Why, oh, why had she not waited a little longer ? Why had her trust in him been so easily shattered ? He had been true to her, while she !—

Suddenly Wilmot spoke again in low tones, which seemed to quiver with the passion he would fain hide, but could not. 'Agnes, I swear to you that at this moment I love you far more than ever I did, that you are infinitely dearer to me than on that night when we last parted ! I know you are another's, that you can never be mine ; but I must tell you this ; I can keep silent no longer. I am willing to believe that circumstances were against us, that had you been less easily led, you would have remained true to me. But be that as it may, I have remained true to you—or rather, to the memory of that Agnes Granby whom I knew of old, for you are not her—you—are Mr Esholt's wife !' There was a

break in his voice as he spoke the last words ; he turned away as if to hide his emotion.

It was a really clever bit of acting. In Mr Wilmot Burrell there was evidently the making of an accomplished *histrion*.

'O Wilmot, I cannot, I dare not listen to you,' cried the heart-stricken young wife. 'Let us return. Forget the past, and—'

'How easily come the words—"Forget the past!" We can no more forget it than we can alter it. But enough. You can never be mine ; that I know to my sorrow. I ask but one thing—do not treat me so coldly, so like a stranger. Let me be at least your friend : more than that I dare not ask to be.'

They heard the others talking, and turned on the instant. Miss Esholt had purposely dawdled by the way, so as to give Agnes and Wilmot time for whatever they might have to say to each other. She glanced sharply at both of them as they came up. What she read in their faces was best known to herself.

'Davy,' she said that night to the faithful old servant, who was brushing her hair, 'Mrs Esholt is walking in a very pleasant meadow at present ; but I see a precipice right in front of her.'

'Then, mistress, why don't you grab her by the sleeve and pull her back?' asked Davy the literal.

'She is walking towards it of her own accord and with wide-open eyes ; why should mine be the hand to pluck her back?'

Wilmot's confession left Agnes powerless for some time to think of anything else. Could what he had told her be true ? she asked herself again and again, while feeling it impossible to doubt that it was so. In that case, what a destiny had she woven for herself ! In the belief that he was unfaithful to her, his image had been gradually becoming fainter and fainter in her memory, while her dawning love for her husband had been growing and expanding day by day. And now in a moment everything was changed. She acknowledged to herself, and trembled while she did so, that the ashes of her first love, which she had flattered herself were utterly extinguished in her heart, had been suddenly rekindled by Wilmot's passionate avowal that she was still as dear to him as ever she had been. Why had not Fate kept them asunder for ever !

After this, matters to all seeming went on as usual at The Hollies. Wilmot came and went as heretofore. All he had asked of Agnes was that in time to come she should treat him not as a stranger, but as a friend. How was it possible for her to refuse such a request ? Little by little her demeanour towards him thawed, day by day her manner became less frigid and more familiar—but it was a familiarity that drew a line which was never overpassed by a hair-breadth. Agnes was still as careful as heretofore to give Wilmot no opportunity for venturing on any further confidences or confessions. It was a great strain on the young wife to have to keep on day after day playing the part she was now playing—to appear to the little world in which she lived and moved as nothing more than the quiet, equable friend of the man in whose heart, as she fully believed, the pulse of love still beat as passionately as of old, and still finding, alas ! despite all her struggles to the contrary,

a faint responsive echo in her own. But the profound respect she felt for her husband, her admiration for his noble qualities, and the recollection of the vows she had taken upon herself at the altar—but more than all, and beyond all else, a certain something of which she herself was only half conscious, a something that touched the very well-springs of her being—upheld her and sustained her throughout her trial.

This change in the demeanour of Agnes was set down by Wilmot to a cause far different from the real one, as was nearly sure to be the case with a man of his calibre. He forgot, or did not choose to remember, that it was he himself who had implored her to treat him in future as a friend—as one who had been the companion of her youth, and had lived for months at a time under her father's roof. His vanity whispered that the love which he still fondly imagined she felt for him was gradually obtaining the mastery over her will. Never had he been more mistaken in his life. The false inference thus drawn served but to confirm and strengthen him in a certain dark design which had been simmering in his brain for some time. He was of a sanguine disposition, and he secretly exulted in the certainty of its accomplishment ; but he was far too wary, or, as he would have termed it, too 'wide awake,' to betray anything of that which was passing in his mind. To all appearance he was just the same as on the day he first set foot across the threshold of The Hollies : to Mr Esholt, deferential, without the slightest trace of servility ; to his wife, respectfully familiar, but still with a certain distance in his manner towards her, and not often addressing her individually ; to Miss Esholt, amusing, chatty, and at all times evidently desirous of making himself as agreeable to her as possible.

But Miss Esholt flattered herself that she was not deceived by these outward manifestations either on one side or the other. She had half divined from the first that there had been a love episode between Agnes and Wilmot at some former period, and herein lay the secret of her tactics on the day of the excursion to Rushmere Grange. She had noticed from the first how studiously Agnes had avoided the possibility of any *tête-à-tête* with the young man ; which only made her the more determined that the chance should be afforded him if she could anyway help in bringing it about. It had seemed to her scheming brain that such an interview might have results unforeseen and uncounted on. She was right in believing that Wilmot, all his studied indifference to the contrary, was still secretly in love with Agnes ; but as regards the latter, she was, equally with Wilmot, in the wrong. Having no particulars of the interview between the two to guide her in arriving at a conclusion, she not unnaturally attached a wrong value to the change in Agnes's demeanour towards her former lover. 'Step by step she is drawing nearer the precipice,' she murmured to herself more than once. 'Can it be that she is walking blindfold, and does not see whether the path she is treading will lead her ? No—I cannot, I will not believe it.'

Some two or three weeks passed thus, when one morning Mr Esholt received a letter which necessitated his immediate departure from home

on a business matter of much moment. He did not expect to be away longer than a week; but as the autumn was now well advanced, and as the fine weather seemed to have broken up, he suggested that during his absence the ladies should effect their removal back to Everton. Agnes scarcely knew whether to be glad or sorry that her sojourn at the seaside was thus brought to an abrupt conclusion. She dreaded going back to a renewal of her former experiences in the gloomy old house, and to the daily, almost hourly companionship of Miss Esholt. But on the other hand, was it not well for her that this brief spell of sunlight should come to an end as quickly as possible? Since the day at Rushmere, her thoughts had gradually become tinged with a dangerous sweetness, to indulge in which, as in the case of certain insidious drugs, seemed to become more of a necessity day by day. Yes, all things considered, it was decidedly for the best that she should go back to Everton and that as speedily as possible.

One of Mr Esholt's last requests before leaving home was that, in his absence, Wilmot Burrell should act as escort to the ladies on the occasion of their journey from New Brighton to Everton.

The news of their departure fell on Wilmot like a thunderclap. He had of course known that the sojourn at New Brighton must come to an end before long; but he had quite counted on its lasting three weeks or a month longer. Mr Esholt's sudden determination seemed likely to interfere seriously with certain plans of his own. When once Agnes was back at Everton, she would be as good as lost to him. Mr Esholt might perchance ask him to dinner once or twice a month, but that was as much as he could look forward to. Whatever he might have to say to Agnes in private must be said before she left The Hollies.

Chance seemed to favour his designs. On the evening before the day fixed for their departure, he called upon the ladies to ascertain whether all their arrangements were completed, or whether they had any final instructions still to give him. He found both Miss Esholt and Miss Remington at The Hollies; but was told that Mrs Esholt had gone as far as the library to take some books back; so, as it was now growing dusk, and there were a number of noisy excursionists about, he said he would go part of the way and meet her. He encountered her about half way as she was coming back. She was somewhat surprised to see him, but made no comment. They walked for a little while in silence; then Wilmot said: 'How soft and still the evening is! But for those noisy revellers in the distance, one might fancy all the world asleep. Somehow, an evening like this always carries me back in memory to those happy hours, "twixt the gloaming and the mirk," which now seem so long ago, when we used to pace the vicarage garden together, or wander drearily, hand in hand, by the side of the soft-flowing river. Old memories and old faces will start up before the most worldly of us at times, and transport us by their magic spell to the happy past. Are you, Agnes, never haunted by such visions of the days that were?' He ventured a glance at her face as he asked the question, but in the dusk he could read nothing.

It was the first time he had ventured to call her by her baptismal name since that day at Rushmere. Some fine instinct seemed to put her on her guard in a moment. 'We are all of us, I hope, haunted by visions of the past at times,' she said gently, but a little coldly. 'We should be worse than we are were it not so. But why dwell so much on the past, Mr Burrell? Why not labour in the present, and look forward to the future cheerfully and with a brave heart?

Both her words and her manner stung him. 'And what is the future to me?' he asked passionately, forgetting for the moment the rôle he had imposed upon himself. 'What have I to hope or care for in time to come? Nothing. You have taken care of that. It is easy for you to preach of hope and cheerfulness—you who can look forward with complacency to always enjoying the same tame, pulseless existence that is yours to-day. But with me it is different. When once I love, I love for ever, and if I cannot possess that which I love, do not ask me to be happy. Why were you faithless to me? Why did you desert me for a richer man? You have taken from me what I valued most on earth; you have stabbed me to the heart, and now you mock me by asking me to sit down, destitute and bleeding, and delude myself with the idea that I am content!'

This was not at all what he had intended to say. He had intended to be sentimental and pathetic; to let her see that the smiling mask he wore before the world hid a bruised and bleeding heart; he had wanted, in short, to so far enlist her sympathies for his assumed sufferings that after her return to Everton his image should still be paramount in her thoughts. Unfortunately for his purpose, he had allowed his temper to carry him away, and almost before the words had passed his lips, he felt that they would have been better unsaid.

Agnes walked on for a few paces before she could steady her nerves sufficiently to reply. When she did speak, it was in cold, measured tones, in which there was an unmistakable touch of scorn. 'Mr Burrell,' she said, 'you and I have always been good friends: we might, perhaps, have been more than that had circumstances controlled our lives differently; but more than friends we can never be now, and less than that there is no desire on my part that we should be. If, therefore, you have any wish that the friendship between us should remain unbroken, I say to you—Beware. It will depend on yourself in future whether we meet as friends or as strangers.'

They reached the garden gate as she ceased speaking. She passed through, thinking that Wilmot would follow her; but he came instead to a sudden halt and let her go forward into the house alone. I've felt that in his present mood he could not face those 'two other women,' as he termed Miss Esholt and Miss Remington to himself. He turned on his heel moodily and took the road which led back to his lodgings. He was savage with himself, savage with Agnes, and, as a matter of course, savage with creation in general. 'I'll bend or break you yet, my fine lady, despite your virtuous airs, which are all a sham, and merely put on to hide your

cowardice,' he muttered between his teeth. ' You love me in your heart, and you can't help yourself ; and you shall yet be mine in spite of everything !'

OUR OLDEST STAPLE INDUSTRY.

SALT MANUFACTURE.

UNTIL recently, it was the custom, at certain festive seasons, to admit the public to an illuminated rock-salt mine in Cheshire, generally for some charitable object. The sight was at once interesting and impressive. Those stupendous pillars holding up the crystal roof, from which depended great stalactitic masses, sparkling in the reflected light of myriads of candles, struck the beholder with amazement ; and as he beheld, he could not fail to reflect with what a liberal hand Nature had provided for one of the sternest of human necessities.

Here, in the district of which Northwich is the centre, are situated those great beds of salt and reservoirs of brine which supply the wants not only of England herself, but also of a large part of the habitable globe. For salt is a necessity—a prime necessity—of human existence. Its very abundance and cheapness make us, the possessors of these rich stores, think perhaps all too lightly of it. Elsewhere, the case is different. In India, for example, where natural beds of salt are found only in limited areas, and those chiefly in the north, vast numbers of our fellow-subjects are dependent upon the supplies they get from England. The people of India are poor, and taxes upon food are to them, as to us, a grievous burden ; yet this necessity of life is taxed, and—so statesmen tell us—necessarily taxed, for purposes of revenue. What would the Englishman say if every ounce of salt that comes to his breakfast-table had first to pass under the thumb of the exciseman ?

An industry so important, and withal so ancient, carried on in our midst presents many features of interest. Its history is interesting ; the methods of carrying on the industry are interesting ; and above all, the effects of the industry upon the physical contour of the district are interesting, and it may be added, even alarming ; for do we not read every now and then of subsidences of the ground—of mines falling in—of lakes forming upon land where not many years ago corn was reaped—of churches, bridges, and dwelling-houses having to be abandoned, and even of risk to human life from the sudden formation of deep holes in the middle of a populous district ?

Let us examine the facts, and see how, from small beginnings, the Cheshire salt-field has obtained so important a place in the world's economy.

Salt was manufactured in the district in very ancient times. The produce, however, when the means of conveyance, and therefore of distribution, were limited was small, and the methods of manufacture of the rudest kind. But, whatever improvements may have been effected in manufacturing appliances, the method adopted was practically the same—that is, by the evaporation of the saturated solution of rock-salt, or brine. Natural brine-springs existed in the district, and were utilised, it would appear, before

rock-salt was even discovered. The Romans, it is believed, were not ignorant of them. In the earliest periods of which we have any record, the brine was raised from shallow pits by means of buckets and hand-pumps ; at length, pumping-power was obtained by water-wheels and wind-mills ; and finally, upon the invention of the steam-engine, this more powerful motor was brought into requisition. The place where salt was manufactured was anciently called a 'wich,' thus, we have still the appellations Northwich, Nantwich, Droitwich, &c., clinging to some of the chief centres of the salt industry.

Droitwich, which is situated in Worcestershire—and one of the most important seats of the salt industry outside the county of Cheshire—early sprang into importance. In the year 816, Kenulph, king of the Mercians, gave 'Hamilton and ten houses in Wich' with salt-furnaces to the church of Worcester ; and about the year 906, Edwy, king of England, endowed the same church with Jeppstone and five salt furnaces, or scales. Of the Cheshire wiches we find the first authentic record in Domesday Book. Inquiry was made, by direction of William the Conqueror, as to the holders of these places in the time of Edward the Confessor, the last hereditary Saxon king ; and we have an account of the wiches and salt-houses then in operation. The rights of property were, even at that early period, exercised over the brine-springs and salt-works.

Some of the laws and customs which regulated the traffic in manufactured salt are exceedingly curious. Thus : 'Whoever loaded his wain so that the axle broke within a league of either wiche, gave two shillings to the king's or the earl's officer if he were overtaken within the league. In like manner he who loaded his horse so as to break its back gave two shillings if overtaken within the league, but nothing if overtaken beyond it. Whoever made two horse-loads of salt out of one was fined forty shillings if the officer overtook him. If he was not found, nothing was to be exacted from any other. Men on foot from another hundred buying salt paid twopence for eight men's loads. Men of the same hundred paid one penny for the same number of loads.'

The salt manufacture in one form or another has been carried on in Cheshire from a very early period, the yield increasing with the population. After the lapse of many years, the pits from which brine had been drawn ceased to be remunerative, and were abandoned, others being sunk as occasion required. The area of manufacture has also extended considerably during the last century, and some places have sprung into importance, notably Winsford, in the valley of the Weaver, which at the present time disputes with Northwich the supremacy as being the chief centre of production.

The geological features of this remarkable salt-field are of peculiar interest. The formation of the 'meres,' so peculiar to Cheshire, is believed to have been due to the solution in past ages of beds of rock-salt lying at great depths below the surface. The depth of the water in one of these meres, at Rostherne, has never been accurately ascertained.

The area of the district in which the saliferous marls have been deposited is, according to Mr Dickinson, Her Majesty's Chief-inspector of Mines,

computed at seven or eight hundred square miles. These marls rest chiefly upon red and variegated sandstones, the exceptions being chiefly south of Macclesfield and beyond the east of Congleton to Odd Rode; and also in part of Lancashire, where they rest upon the carboniferous formation. Beyond Frodsham, extending in a westerly and then in a northerly direction, the salt deposits in the geological epochs seem to have been formed in what is now occupied by part of the estuary of the Mersey. In the salt districts of Cheshire, outcrops of the saliferous marls and marlstones exist in several localities, as at Acton and Winsford.

No outcrop of rock-salt now remains in the salt districts of the United Kingdom. The depth to the top of the rock-salt, called the rock-head, is one hundred and thirty-two feet at Northwich, and one hundred and ninety-five feet at Winsford, whilst at Middlewich no rock-salt has yet been discovered.

Geologists are by no means agreed as to the manner in which these enormous beds of rock-salt were formed. There is, however, a leaning by competent observers to the theory that during the Permian age successive subsidences and upheavals of the land took place; that at each depression of the surface the sea overflowed an extensive low-lying area, where eventually a deposit of salt was formed by evaporation; and that by repetitions of this process the vast beds which we now find were accumulated. In a rough way, the thickness of the beds has been averaged at one hundred and fifty feet, and the extent twenty miles by twelve or fifteen miles; but this extent has not been actually proved.

Practically, the deposits are considered inexhaustible. The upper surface of the rock-salt appears to undulate similarly to the undulations of the surface of the ground. It is upon the top bed of the rock-salt that the brine called rock-head brine ordinarily lies.

The raising of rock-salt is not now carried on to the same extent as formerly. Brine is abundant, and is more readily converted into the salt of commerce, the 'rock' produced by the mines being used almost exclusively in the alkali manufacture. The stores of brine will undoubtedly exist so long as there is plenty of rock-salt to which surface-water, percolating through the superincumbent earth and marl, can have access. The rock is very readily converted into brine by the simple process of solution, which is ceaselessly carried on under ground by the silent operations of Nature. As soon as it reaches a certain depth, the water finds its way into some one of the innumerable streams which are for ever eating away the rock-head, and flowing, in the form of brine, towards the works where pumping is carried on. These streams are locally called 'brine-runs.' This is a constant, ceaseless operation, in which Nature adapts herself in a wonderful way to man's necessities, till we have come to believe that what is will always be. So, indeed, we may take it, for all practical purposes; for, in spite of the increasing output of manufactured salt, no one has yet been known to express a fear, as in the case of our coal-supply, that we are within measurable distance of seeing the exhaustion of our stores.

The underground brine-runs have been proved

to extend for miles. The law by which they are guided seems only the requirement of a supply of water, and descent. Some of them, as the subsidences show, take nearly straight courses, whilst others twist about in various directions. The course taken will probably be where the resistance is least, or where the rock-salt is softest, or in hollows on its surface.

The quantity of brine used annually has been estimated at nine million tons, which will yield (allowance being made for waste) 1,800,000 tons of white salt. A gallon of fully saturated brine contains two pounds eight ounces, sometimes two pounds ten ounces, of salt. The general average of sea-water does not exceed three to three and a half per cent. The manufacture of white or table salt, and practically of commercial salt of every description, is effected by evaporation in shallow pans, either over a coal-fire or by the utilisation of waste steam from engine-boilers. The heat applied varies according to the quality of salt which it is desired to produce. Domestic salt of the finest grain requires for its manufacture a temperature of two hundred and twenty-six degrees Fahrenheit—the boiling-point for brine. As the liquid evaporates, the solid particles sink to the bottom of the pan, forming in the aggregate the lumps with which every housewife is so familiar. For commoner salt the temperature is one hundred and sixty to one hundred and seventy degrees Fahrenheit. This salt is close in texture, and clustered together in larger or smaller pyramids, according to the heat applied. For large-grained flaky salt the temperature is one hundred and thirty to one hundred and forty degrees Fahrenheit; and for large-grained fishing-salt, one hundred to one hundred and ten degrees—the slowness of the evaporation allowing the salt to form in cubical crystals.

What used to be called bay-salt, or salt formed by the operation of the air and heat of the sun, although still extensively practised in warmer climates, seems now to be a thing of the past in this country. In the earliest times, this process was probably the only one carried on. Either brine or sea-water was run into shallow pits or reservoirs, where it evaporated to a certain degree, the work being afterwards completed by pouring upon twigs, and sometimes, it is said, by pouring the liquid upon burning wood and collecting the salt deposited upon the ashes. Until long after historic times, wood was the only fuel used; it was not until the year 1656 that the substitution of coal, at Nantwich, is mentioned as a novelty. This might be explained by the difficulty of carriage in those days, as no coal-beds exist within a good many miles of the salt districts.

What, it is interesting to ask, must be the effect upon the district of the abstraction of this enormous quantity of rock-salt and brine? It is not difficult to see that some change in the physical features of the country must in process of time be brought about. And had past generations of those engaged in the manufacture given it a thought, they must have foreseen what is now actually taking place before our eyes. Not that they could have arrested the threatened mischief, for that was, and is, physically impossible, save by putting an end to the industry altogether. The inevitable, it may be said, is

now fully recognised by all interested—that, as brine is pumped up, every gallon representing so much of the ‘rock-head’ (rock-salt) washed away, so must the ground subside to fill up the subterranean caverns which are in perpetual course of formation.

The effects of this process of solution and pumping have become more and more visible in recent years, as the manufacture of salt has increased. Any one visiting the town of Northwich for the first time cannot fail to be struck with the singular aspect presented by whole streets of buildings. If an earthquake had visited the place, shops and dwelling-houses, bridges and public buildings, could not have presented a more higgledy-piggledy tumble-down appearance. Here we find an hotel yard where the earth not long since sank without warning, swallowing up a farmer's horse and leaving a yawning chasm dangerous to approach. There you see shops and houses which have sunk by a more gradual process, for the doorsteps are below the street-level, and the walls lean this way and that. The town bridge over the river Weaver some few years ago gave way, and became dangerous from the same cause. A building where sat the County Court judge has had to be abandoned; gas and water pipes are constantly breaking below the pavements; and, more alarming still, at intervals of a few years, subsidences on an enormous scale are reported, happily not in the town itself, but in the immediate district, threatening with swift destruction a considerable area. Yet the people take it all as a matter of course. Lakes of considerable extent have formed on what was, within living memory—within a score of years in some cases—rich agricultural land; and while the salt Companies are amassing wealth by this destruction of arable ground, it would appear that the luckless owners of the soil are without remedy! A sheet of water called Witton Flash, near Northwich, has been formed by the gradual sinking of the earth, beginning early in the century, until a year or two ago it was reported to be more than one hundred acres in extent, its depth varying from seven to eighty-five feet—the latter at a place where originally there was nothing but a small brook. In the process of subsidence, a corn-mill and other erections have been submerged. There are other ‘flashes’ or hollows filled with water in close proximity to that at Witton, and, like it, undergoing constant enlargement.

The most dangerous kind of subsidence is that which occurs—and happily the occurrence is rare—through the falling-in of a rock-salt mine. The last and most alarming occurrence of this sort was in 1880, when the roof of Platt's Hill Mine, belonging to Mr John Thompson, gave way, causing an inrush of water from the Weaver and from neighbouring streams, and filling up the mine to a great depth. This was not an abandoned mine, but was actually being worked. The inundation took place a little before six o'clock in the morning, ere the miners went down; otherwise, there might have been serious loss of life. Besides some old workings communicating with Platt's Hill Mine, that mine itself was very extensive, with excavations fifteen to eighteen feet in height, the depth of the shafts being three hundred and twenty-one feet. ‘On my arrival,’ says Mr Dickinson, the government inspector, ‘next day I found the water up to seventy-eight feet from the top of the Platt's

Hill shafts, being considerably above the rock-head and nearly level with the Weaver navigation. Many acres of the surface were still on the move, with large cracks or breaks going on, and water was bubbling up in levelling itself in the numerous ponds, and, as air was being forced out under considerable pressure from the old excavations, bringing with it a smell, like sewage, or the long accumulated remains from powder-smoke. Parts of Ashton's salt-works and a large chimney had fallen into some of the chasms, and the road and the brine-pipes for conveying brine from brine-pits to salt-works were broken up.’ The occurrence was considered one of the most extensive and alarming that had ever occurred in the district. When the inundation was in full force, the large ponds surrounding the old fallen-in pits looked like so many boiling caldrons with the water and air bursting up over the surface; and on the banks were a number of what were called by the people of the neighbourhood mud volcanoes, the wet earth being thrown up to the height of seven or eight feet.

The inundation of these old rock-salt mines is not wholly a disaster to their owners, for in course of time the water eats away the rock-salt until it becomes saturated, when it is pumped up in the form of brine. Such occurrences as that described are, however, sufficiently alarming. It is a fortunate circumstance that, up to the present time, there has been little if any personal injury either to workpeople concerned in the trade or to the general public on account of these repeated subsidences, though the damage to property is very considerable.

It may be remarked, in closing this paper, that a new direction has recently been given to the salt manufacture by the formation of what is known as the Salt Union (Limited). The object of the Union is ‘to consolidate the undertakings of the salt proprietors in the United Kingdom, with a view to ending reckless competition,’ which, it is averred, ‘injurious affects the salt industry without affording any adequate advantage to the public.’

MR MAGSDALE'S COURTSHIP.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

BY EDWARD D. CUMING.

CHAPTER I.—HE PROPOSES.

MRS CORNELIA BUNSHAW sat in her armchair by the fire, dividing her attention about equally between the book on her lap and the clock on the mantel-piece. ‘A quarter to twelve, and Peter is not in yet,’ said Mrs Bunshaw; ‘nearly midnight, and that precious pair still gadding about. It's disgraceful, scandalous! Once in a way, I shouldn't mind it, perhaps; but this makes the third late night in one week. I won't go to bed till I give Peter a bit of my mind, if I sit up till daylight to do it.’

This harangue, which was apparently addressed to the cat, referred to the lady's brother Mr Peter Magsdale, and her cousin Mr Allan Magsdale, who had gone out immediately after dinner ‘for a stroll,’ with a parting injunction to her not to sit up for them.

We will take advantage of the opportunity offered by Mrs Bunshaw's temporary quietude to describe her appearance and circumstances, the first being somewhat remarkable. She is a tall angular woman, of about fifty, with hard features, and large thick-lipped mouth. Gray hair, cut short, and rather unkempt. She wears a plain black stuff dress and an ancient shawl. She is a clever strong-minded woman, who has taken a prominent part in organising and promoting a 'Society for the Protection of Women's Rights,' the members of which still regard her as its moving spirit. She seldom takes an active part in its proceedings now, however, except at the annual meeting, when Mrs Cornelia Bunshaw's speech is looked forward to as the feature of an occasion whose importance is not yet fully recognised by the world on which the Society's operations are destined to have a stupendous and far-reaching effect. An unlovely being is Mrs Bunshaw, and we see her at her worst as she sits bolt upright, listening with wrathful eagerness for the footsteps she expects to hear every moment on the gravel path outside.

The late Mr Bunshaw departed this life many years ago, taking with him a wide theoretical knowledge of the rights of women, and a burning practical sense of the wrongs of man, for which he was indebted to the principles and teachings of the wife he left behind him. His childless relict now resided with her brother and cousin at Astley Villa, Putney. The former, Mr Peter Magsdale, was thirty-three years of age, a small retiring person, the very meekest and most timid of Somerset House clerks. His sister, who was left a considerable fortune, made him heir to her property on the condition that she was to take up her abode with him when and for so long as she pleased—a stipulation he often deeply regretted, but had not courage to repudiate. Mr Allan Magsdale, the cousin, aged twenty-six, was an architect by profession. He possessed a boundless fund of animal spirits, and his guiding principle in life was to obtain as much enjoyment from it as possible. It would be hard to find two men more dissimilar in every respect than Peter and Allan; but they lived together in the most perfect concord, until Mrs Bunshaw's arrival at Astley Villa wrought a change in the spirit of their dream, and drew them even more closely together than before.

'Peter would never behave like this if he were left to himself,' soliloquised his sister. 'It's Allan I have to thank for leading him astray. But it shan't go on. I'll let Peter understand that Master Allan must look out for other quarters. He shan't stay here another week.'

It would not be easy to define Mrs Bunshaw's objection to her brother's doings. They could not have caused her any inconvenience, and her task of sitting up for him was purely self-imposed. It is probable that the intense dislike she had for her cousin was the motive which prompted her to interfere, for she was perfectly correct in assigning

Peter's misconduct to him. Without him, Mr Magsdale would have known the orgies called smoking concerts only by name; the music halls of the metropolis would have been untrodden ground; whilst the idea of snug but rather uproarious little suppers after such entertainments would hardly have entered his mind. Now, thanks to Allan, he 'knew his way about,' and he reaped a fearful joy from his little wickednesses, which derived additional piquancy from the fact that the sister who ruled him knew little of the manner in which his evenings were spent. But though Mrs Bunshaw was ignorant of the exact nature of his nocturnal pastimes, and disdained to question him on the subject, the late hours he affected furnished her with ample grounds for the indignant wrath she cherished against the hardened sinner who led him astray. Latterly, she had observed a discreet reticence in her intercourse with Allan; his buoyant soul and unfailing good temper rendered him impervious to patronage and snubs alike; whilst his aggravating habit of turning her most cutting sarcasms into ridicule, had forced her to conclude that it was safest to leave him alone.

It was past midnight when Mrs Bunshaw's strained attention caught the sound of a latch-key being stealthily inserted in the lock, and she drew herself up to receive the delinquents, whose hushed movements in the hall betrayed their belief that the occupants of the house were in bed.

'We might have a little drink before turning in,' said Mr Magsdale as he opened the drawing-room door. 'Go and get the things from the sideboard, like a good fellow.'

Allan departed on his errand, leaving his unsuspecting relative to enter the drawing-room and encounter Mrs Bunshaw by himself.

'Are you aware of the hour, Peter?' she asked the startled man, with a tragic wave of the arm in the direction of the clock.

'About twelve, isn't it?' he replied with rather sickly nonchalance. He could never muster up courage to face his sister unless supported by Allan: she carried far too many guns for him.

'About twenty-five minutes past twelve, Peter,' said the lady in measured tones which conveyed a world of meaning.

Mr Magsdale drew out his watch, and after looking earnestly at it, acknowledged the impeachment.

'Ah, perhaps it is about bedtime,' he said, listening anxiously for Allan's approach.—'Missed the train—sorry we're so late,' he added in a penitent murmur.

Mrs Bunshaw turned upon him and with awful calmness began: 'I must leave your house, Peter. I came here with the wish and the intention of guarding your interests; but the life of debauchery which you lead—which you have been led into, I should say—makes my residence here impossible. I must go.'

She paused. Her brother would have given half his income for courage enough to bid her go and never return, but nature had not endowed him with it, so he sighed sadly and said: 'Oh no, Corny; I couldn't think of it.'

This, of course, was the answer she expected, and she resumed: 'I should be most unwilling to go—most unwilling; my duty is to remain

with you. But unless Allan Magsdale leaves the house, I must do so. You see that yourself.'

Mr Magsdale did not see it at all, but only replied again more faintly than before: 'Oh no, Corny; I couldn't think of it.'

At this juncture the door flew open in response to a vigorous kick without, and Allan entered with his tray. 'I can't lay hands on a bottle of soda-water,' he said testily. 'I suppose Cornelie!—'

Mrs Bunshaw, who had escaped his observation in the dim lamplight, emitted a warning cough; and Allan altered his tone to one of persuasive sweetness as he addressed her: 'Have you any in the house, Cornelie?'

'None,' curtly responded the lady.

'Oh, never mind,' said he, taking her favourite armchair and stooping forward to turn up the lamp.—'Tell me when to stop, Peter,' he continued, pressing a glass into his kinsman's hand and grasping the decanter; whilst Mrs Bunshaw looked on in speechless rage.

There was not in all London and its suburbs a more temperate man than Peter Magsdale; but at this moment he was so absorbed in his sister's threatening attitude, which presaged an immediate storm, that he accepted half a tumbler of brandy before he noticed what had been given him. As he held it mechanically up to the light, Mrs Bunshaw strode forward and took it from his hand.

'Are you going to drink all this, Peter?' she asked, striving to speak calmly. She was furiously angry; but so well did she succeed in controlling herself, that the obliging Allan mistook her meaning, and courteously rose, offering to bring a tumbler for her. He had not the least intention of giving offence; it was not unusual for her to join them in a 'nightcap,' but he could not have selected a more unpropitious time to remind her of it. Mrs Bunshaw cast a withering look upon him, but did not deign to make any reply. She possessed herself of the decanter, carefully replaced the contents of her brother's glass in it, and, still retaining the decanter, swept from the room, leaving the two to enjoy what refreshment they might want from the water-jug. Having locked up the spirits, she returned, and, ignoring her cousin's presence, reiterated the announcement she had made before: 'Either I leave the house, or Mr Allan Magsdale goes; and I shall be glad if you will make up your mind on the point to-night, Peter.'

'She's in earnest,' said Peter sorrowfully to his cousin when the slam of Mrs Bunshaw's bedroom door pronounced her to be safely out of hearing. 'She attacked me about it as soon as I came in.'

'Pooh! she doesn't mean anything,' replied Allan easily. 'It will be all right to-morrow morning.'

'You don't know Cornelie,' said Peter; 'I do,' and he shook his head mournfully. 'Of course, it's out of the question for me to let her go away. She would alter her will the same day.'

'If you really think your sister wants me to leave, I'll go.—I know it isn't your doing, old fellow; and I should be glad to stay on myself, though the house hasn't been what it used to be for the last six months.'

Peter Magsdale's heart sank as Allan spoke;

he would lose much by his cousin's departure. Even without Mrs Bunshaw's restraining hand, he would never have the spirit to embark on a night's 'spree' all by himself; he would be completely lost without his guide. But that was a phase of the impending change in his household that he knew it was useless to dwell upon. If Allan went, he might say good-bye to his evening amusements, for Mrs Bunshaw would not allow him to go outside the garden after his dinner. He was a weak vacillating creature, and the influence his sister had over him was entirely due to her superior strength of will, though he always attributed his submission to the very remote 'prospects' contingent upon her demise.

'No more pleasure in life for me, if you go,' he said dismally.

'Oh, nonsense; you can take care of yourself by now.'

'Cornelia will make the house unbearable if I cross her,' sighed Peter; 'no more suppers at the Gaiety for me.'

'And what about Miss Cressburn, Peter?' asked Allan with a chuckle.

Mr Magsdale blushed, and assumed a more abject look of melancholy than he had worn before. Miss Mary Cressburn was a young lady whose acquaintance he had made through his cousin's kind offices, and to whom he had lately paid a marked degree of attention. She was an orphan, in poor circumstances, supporting herself and the aunt with whom she lived by giving music lessons. The Magsdales' visits to her house were always made in the evening, and Peter concealed none of his doings more jealously from his sister than this tender dalliance with his heart's mistress. Mrs Bunshaw had long cherished a matrimonial scheme of her own regarding him; and this gifted woman was so accustomed to regulate every action of his life without resistance, that she had brought herself to believe that the consummation of her wishes was only a question of time. The lady she had selected to be her sister-in-law was Miss Anna Terripeg, her most intimate friend and staunchest disciple. Miss Terripeg was by no means averse from the idea, and having satisfied herself on this point, Mrs Bunshaw had proceeded to sound Peter. It was mortifying to discover that the gentleman was not prepared to consider the subject of matrimony at all for the present, and persisted in treating her proposals with unbecoming lightness. This was baffling; but so long as his young affections remained free, there was room for hope: Miss Terripeg had at least no rivals to contend with, reflected Mrs Bunshaw.

Now, if she came to hear of his attachment to Miss Cressburn, she would spare no pains to sift the matter and throw obstacles in his way; indeed, if she took a firm stand, he doubted his ability to continue his courtship at all. A faint-hearted, timorous lover was our friend Peter. Miss Cressburn would have lent a willing ear, had he been able to screw up courage to propose to her; but he did not know this, and nursed his hopes fondly, confiding them to Allan, who, we must admit, had been mischievously diligent in furthering a business which he knew would be so distasteful to Mrs Bunshaw.

'You will be able to make opportunities of seeing her easily enough, if you care for her,' said

Allan, with an effort to prick a little life into his cousin. 'It's too ridiculous to let Cornelia have a word in that.'

'You don't know what she is,' groaned Peter. 'Cornelia and the Terripeg woman between them'— He broke off with a shudder, which moved Allan to uncontrollable laughter.

'I know quite enough, anyhow,' he rejoined. 'I'll look up some rooms I know of to-morrow, and I daresay I shall be able to move into them next week; so you may tell her that it's all settled.'

A very silent party assembled at breakfast the next morning. Mrs Bunshaw, not having been made aware of Allan's intentions, shrouded herself in dignified reserve. Peter was unusually gloomy and dejected; and his cousin having failed to draw him into conversation, devoted himself to his meal without even attempting to pay Cornelia the somewhat cramped civilities which duty demanded of him.

'I am sorry that it is necessary for you to leave us, Allan,' she said, in a tone which implied that it was all his doing, and much against her inclinations. She took his departure for granted, knowing she could have her own way about banishing him.

'I'm sorry, too; but I couldn't have stayed much longer in any case,' he replied; and he quitted the room, followed by Peter, who was carefully avoiding a *tête-à-tête* with his sister.

Allan's readiness to leave Astley Villa was a little disappointing to Mrs Bunshaw. She prided herself upon her adamantine firmness, and had hoped her cousin would have given her a chance of displaying it by begging her to let him remain with them. She had prepared one of her 'little speeches' (Peter knew the kind), in which she would kindly but sternly resist such an appeal. It was annoying that this weak pretence of putting her authority on one side, this transparent assumption of willingness to go, should compel her to leave it unspoken. It was bravado, nothing else.

'I should have told Cornelia that I couldn't continue to live in the same house with her, if I had stayed in the room another five minutes,' said Allan as they started for the station *en route* for their respective offices.

'It's no use quarrelling with her,' said Peter.— 'By the way, will you come with me to Queen's Road on Sunday afternoon? I want to see Mary Cressburn.'

'I'll come; and I hope you will take advantage of the occasion, Peter. I suspect your evening visits are things of the past.'

As a matter of fact, Mr Magsdale had proposed the visit with the deliberate intention of 'coming to the point,' trying to close his eyes to possible results. 'I was just thinking about it,' he replied.

'That's right,' said his mentor encouragingly. 'I'll take care you get a chance; and see that you make the most of it.'

'I don't know what Cornelia will say,' the amorous Peter went on after a pause. 'Don't you think I had better tell her?' He looked up questioningly, and his adviser promptly gave him his directions.

'Now, look here, Peter,' he said. 'You just hold your tongue until you are safely married.'

If Cornelia finds out before, I don't believe you've got the pluck to defy her; and as a row is inevitable in any case, you may as well let it stand over till it can do no harm.'

Mr Magsdale fairly gasped: this was taking time by the forelock with a vengeance, and the very idea of such a step took away his breath. He had the most implicit confidence in Allan, however, and was so accustomed to follow his guidance, that he did not even raise any objections; indeed, he hardly realised what the advice implied. 'Thank you,' said this trembling lover. 'It would be the best way, I believe.'

'Of course it's the best way. Why, my dear man, we'll have you nicely settled before Christmas!'

Within six weeks! Allan's audacity carried Peter away, and he parted with him, feeling, that if Miss Cressburn's answer should be 'Yes,' he was committed to a line of action she would not be likely to approve of. 'I'll wait and see,' he wisely decided. 'If she thinks Allan is right, we will follow his advice.' Nevertheless, he quailed as he thought of the consequences he would have to meet afterwards.

The important Sunday afternoon came round at last, and Peter set forth on his knightly quest, spurred and stimulated by the indefatigable Allan. They had some difficulty in escaping without Mrs Bunshaw, for her brother's preoccupation had roused her suspicious nature, and if Allan had not stepped into the breach, the expedition must have been abandoned. They were only going to call on some friends of his up at Queen's Road. Of course, if Mrs Bunshaw cared to come, they would be delighted; but it was a long way, and the people were not very interesting. The explanation allayed her doubts, and she let them go, reflecting that they could not get into much mischief on Sunday wherever they went.

'Does Miss Cressburn know anything about Cornelia?' asked Allan as they walked along.

'No. Do you think I ought to mention her?'

'I wouldn't, unless you are prepared to bring them together, which would hardly suit your plans.'

'Not at all,' replied Peter briskly. He was beginning to feel quite reckless, now his mind had been made up for him, and was prepared to rush upon his fate as soon as he found himself face to face with it.

Allan certainly did everything the most sympathetic helper could be expected to do in such a case. He drew old Miss Parkins, the aunt, to one end of the room, and exerted himself manfully to keep her attention from the pair in the distant corner. He knew that if Peter imagined that he was being watched, he would be thrown completely off his balance for the time; and as Miss Parkins' ideas were few and her conversational powers somewhat undeveloped, his task was not an easy one. Moreover, she suspected the nature of Peter's mission, and did not altogether approve of it; and at the end of a quarter of an hour she broke away from Allan, and approaching her niece, asked her pointedly if she was not going out for a walk this afternoon. Miss Cressburn started; but after a tender inquiring glance at Peter, answered in the affirmative, and the two ladies left the room together.

'Congratulate me!' exclaimed Mr Magsdale with a comical assumption of superiority.

'With pleasure.—Did you find any difficulty?' asked his cousin with the air of a man who did that kind of thing every day of his life and was versed in its intricacies.

'None whatever,' replied Peter. 'But I must say I am glad it's over,' he modestly added.

'Ah! Have you settled the day?'

Mr Magsdale had not settled the day; he had found the task of declaring himself quite as much as he could manage, and was content to leave the rest in abeyance for the present.

Allan looked a little disappointed. He was bent on revenging himself on Mrs Bunshaw, and had cherished wild schemes of a civil marriage at the registrar's office in the course of the ensuing week. His notions on the subject were crude, to say the least of them, and he had lost sight of the fact that Miss Cressburn was not likely to prove so tractable as Peter.

Miss Parkins and her niece now returned to the room, and the four set out on their walk. It was a lovely afternoon: a stray September day seemed to remain behind to contrast itself with the murky November, which is the unpleasantest month of the London year, and Miss Parkins, who was an enthusiastic pedestrian, evidently intended to make the most of it. She took possession of Mr Magsdale, and, much to his chagrin, he had no opportunity of speaking to Miss Cressburn again by herself, though her aunt followed the young lady's movements with tantalising close-

ness. Unfortunately, some malignant fate prompted Mrs Bunshaw to go for a solitary walk that afternoon, and so guided her steps that she came upon the little party at the moment Allan was bidding Mary Cressburn good-bye with more tenderness than Peter considered was at all necessary. She saw them without being observed herself, and passed on, resolving to take her brother to task as soon as he returned. 'These, then, were Mr Allan Magsdale's friends; these were the people Peter had been so anxious to go and see without her.' There was something at the bottom of this, and Mrs Bunshaw intended to find out what it was.

She was very stern and forbidding in her manner when the cousins came in; a tactical error on her part, for it caused Peter to avoid giving her the chance she wanted of cross-examining him by himself. She was anxious that Allan should not hear her inquiries, but finally curiosity overcame her, and, she spoke. 'Who were the ladies I saw you with to-day, Peter?' she asked carelessly.

The question was so utterly unlooked-for, and Peter's mind at the moment was so taken up in thinking about one of the ladies, that for an instant he fancied that his sister had acquired a new and dangerous talent for thought-reading.

'They were friends,' he blundered—'friends, friends of'— He broke down, and threw a beseeching look at Allan, who swallowed a morsel with provoking deliberation and came to his aid.

'Great friends of mine, Cornelia,' he said airily. 'Very dear friends. I took Peter to see her—that is, them, as I thought he'd like to know them.'

If Mrs Bunshaw's eyes had been turned upon her brother instead of the speaker, the look of intense relief and gratitude he cast at Allan might have turned her suspicions into the right channel; but as it was, she remarked that she had passed them, and wondered who they were.

'Who are these friends of Allan's?' asked Mrs Bunshaw, when that mendacious person left the room.

'A Miss Parkins and her niece,' said Peter, who had seized his cousin's hint, and meant to act upon it even at the sacrifice of truth.

'He seems to know them very well,' she continued, watching him narrowly.

'Yes, I believe he does,' assented Peter.

'The young lady is the attraction, no doubt.—Does he seem to like her?'

'Oh no—I mean yes,' replied the unhappy Peter, recovering himself in time. Allan like Mary! He recoiled from the idea, but must support it to save himself.

'He said the other day it would be impossible for him to remain here much longer in any case,' mused Mrs Bunshaw. 'I thought at the time it was merely brag; but now I begin to see daylight. Mr Allan no doubt is very clever and very deep; but he doesn't think to deceive me, I hope: I can put two and two together.'

So Cornelia Bunshaw put two and two together, and, like many people who are inexpert at such worldly arithmetic, she made them anything but four.

L U N C H E O N S.

As some trades and callings have always been ridiculed or denounced, so some meals have been selected as butts for the attacks of moralists and sanitarians. 'Suppers' were the favourite *bêtes noires* of certain 'abstinence doctors' of the last century; and in one of the medieval 'Moralities,' the play turns upon a solemn trial of this meal before the judge 'Experience.' 'Supper' is accused of having murdered four persons by gorging, and only escapes the extreme penalty of the law by agreeing never again to approach within six hours of dinner. Elderly persons may remember a similar prejudice against the now universally acknowledged meal of luncheon. When four or five o'clock was the usual dinner hour, some sturdy individuals held it needless to partake of refreshments between breakfast and the later meal. To require such extra nourishment was akin to the enormities of desiring bedroom fires, warm water for ablutions, and other 'coddling' and effeminate luxuries. It must be confessed that, in houses where luncheon was provided, its opponents often ended their objections after the fashion of the gentleman described in one of Miss Sinclair's novels, who finished his denunciations against this repast 'in the way gentlemen usually do, by drawing his chair to the table and making a hearty meal.'

Luncheon has now triumphed over its opponents and become a recognised institution; unless we look upon it as an old friend rechristened, the dinner of ancient times being at the modern luncheon

hour ; while our ancestors supped at the hour at which their descendants dine. According to Dr Wendell Holmes, luncheons are among the pleasantest forms of social hospitality. 'This luncheon is a very convenient affair ; it does not require any special dress ; it is informal ; it is soon over ; and can be light or heavy as one chooses.' Breakfasts, a form of entertainment so popular years back, and still patronised by some persons, are less admired by our American visitor.

Many and varied are the forms of luncheon entertainments. There is the social country-house gathering, with a view to an afternoon of lawn-tennis or archery, a meal to which no formal invitations are issued, but to which intimates drop in, or are brought at the last moment by members of the family. A hospitable household, well supplied with young people, usually makes luncheon an elastic meal as regards numbers. Dinner is a more formal affair, and sacred from sudden additions ; but at luncheon, Mary's school-friends drop in unrebuked ; and Charlie meets young Robinson riding past the gate, and makes him dismount and remain for lunch and a game of tennis after the meal ; which has a pleasant informal sociability about it. Luncheons of this description are useful factors in the game of matrimony, intimacies being formed at these friendly entertainments which could never take place at a formal dinner-party. Then there is the more stately London luncheon-party, to which guests are bidden by formal invitation, but which has always the advantage of brevity as compared with the dinner-party. Shy celebrities who profess 'not to go into society' and to eschew 'late hours and formal parties,' can often be lured into attending a luncheon meal ; and the hostess finds it possible to capture a lion at half-past one, whom she could never have secured at eight o'clock. Pleasant, too, are the luncheons in the open air, when the ladies of the country-house meet the hungry shooting-party, bearing with them a store of good things, which are enjoyed as meals under a roof, served in ordinary fashion, never can be. There is something absolutely appetite-provoking in the very description of that famous out-of-door luncheon in *Pickwick*, when Sam Weller arranges the viands with suggestive comments, and Mr Pickwick at last falls a victim to the insidious seductions of 'cold punch.' Picnic parties proper are less agreeable. An outdoor luncheon should never be too large and pretentious an affair. A small party of intimates and a simple repast are infinitely more pleasant than an assemblage of persons half strangers to each other, and an elaborate menu that requires the attendance of servants. Picnic parties of this latter description are usually very dull affairs. As Albert Smith records :

The wood was always very damp,
The water never boiled ;
We wore the smartest things we had,
And they were always spoiled.

How many of us have pleasant recollections of luncheons eaten at the side of a hill in company with a Highland guide ; of simple repasts at wayside rural inns during a walking tour ; of well-earned refreshment during a tough Alpine

climb. More enjoyable are the sandwiches and flask of sherry than the elaborate repast of the fashionable picnic party, happily now a rare form of entertainment. Years ago, picnics were often organised ; and middle-aged people sat on shawls on the grass with secret fears as to rheumatism, and tried to look as if they enjoyed eating with their plates on their knees ; while the younger members of the party, in their best apparel, flirted discreetly, but would have been happier if their dresses and complexions had been less exposed to sun and possible showers. Ours is scarcely the climate for fashionable folk to play at Corydon and Phyllis in the open air.

Of all luncheons, the 'family one' is perhaps the most objectionable, at least to others than members of the family. Many mothers practise the highly commendable custom of gathering their olive branches about them at the mid-day meal, when, to quote an educational guide, 'the parent can judge of her children's health by their appetite, and correct any little breaches of good manners at table.' All this is praiseworthy and excellent ; but it is a mistake to invite guests to the scene of these maternal cares. The visitor at one of these juvenile assemblages need not expect to gain any attention from his hostess. Vainly does he relate his choicest anecdotes and essay his best conversational powers. Willie invariably chokes himself at the critical part of the story, or Mary requires a second helping just as the guest has fairly started an interesting topic of conversation. The mother's attention is always wandering and divided. The children, their needs, their accidents with table utensils, their solecisms of etiquette, engross her real interest, though she makes a hollow show of listening to her visitor. Probably, if a woman, the guest is expected to perform small table offices for the little ones—to cut up meat, crumble bread, and the like—tasks which, if unaccustomed to the charge of children, the visitor performs amiss, and is rebuked for her shortcomings by the juveniles. 'O ma, Miss —— has put gravy over my bread ;' or, 'I can't eat fat, you know.' Children are delightful in their right place ; but are not good assistants of digestion to persons unaccustomed to their society. It would be kinder, to both children and visitors, if parents who preside at 'family luncheons' were to invite their guests to other repasts than these meals.

The luncheon in its pleasantest form is only an enjoyment possible to the rich—at least of the male sex. Busy men cannot afford the time to indulge in this luxury. A biscuit or a sandwich hastily devoured constitutes too often the mid-day meal of many a professional or business man, and hence, say the doctors, come manifold forms of dyspepsia. Yet what is the worker to do ? To leave chambers or office and partake of a solid mid-day meal, returning at once to brain and desk work, is to treat the digestive organs in the worst manner. To sacrifice a couple of the busiest hours of the day is equally out of the question. Professional men are rarely absolute masters of their own time, and cannot break up important consultations, dismiss clients or patients, delay answering letters, refuse interviews, because it is their luncheon-time.

The labourer or the artisan is sure of his uninterrupted mid-day meal-hour ; the better-class

toiler has no such privilege. Hence luncheon has, for many of us, when we are able to partake of it in due and leisurely form, all the pleasure of a rare luxury.

ODD THINGS FROM CHILDREN.

AN examiner in elementary schools often hears many amusing answers in reply to his questions. The following are examples of written composition from children in the upper standards. It must not be assumed, however, that in giving these quaint specimens, any slur is being cast upon the general character of the work in elementary schools; these are taken from many thousands of papers, a great number of which are of undoubted excellence, and it often happens that where the majority of the pupils in a class acquit themselves satisfactorily, one child will be found who is quite 'at sea.'

Here is a description of a plum-pudding by a boy whose knowledge is evidently theoretical, and, like his pudding, somewhat mixed: 'When they have put all these in, they make it into a batter and then mix it up: and when they have finished battering it, they put it on the fire for about an hour and a half, to get it to be enough, so that it will be better to eat and softer to chew.'

From cooking we come to natural history, and have the following: 'Guinea-pigs are very pretty little creatures, and people generally have them as a joint for dinner.' The guinea-pig and the sucking-pig were evidently one and the same in the mind of this ingenuous youth.

Here is another in the same department of learning: 'Bees live chiefly on worms and snakes, and are searching for them nearly every hour of the day. Besides this they also live on little insects, which when they are not so very busy, they go down into the ground and have a very nice feast. It is very pleasant indeed in the summer time to watch them making their hive and weaving their honey.'

A pupil was asked to name and describe four kinds of fruit, with this result: 'The four kinds is apples, pears, rubub and carrots and many others.' He was a town boy, whose garden of nature was evidently a greengrocer's cart.

Here is some light on another branch of knowledge: 'Whale ships are large, and have an hold in which a lubber is stored.' Seamen will agree that the hold is the best place for the lubber.

The following on 'feathers' was very difficult to interpret, but at last it proved that the writer had mistaken features for feathers. 'The feathers of anything is the looking of you: some people have deseases and cause them to have an unpleasant look. Sometimes when people go to apply for a situation they don't get it owing to their feathers and bad faces; the master who they ask generally says that he takes beer and won't do for a job of that kind. People who is not ill so much generally has good feathers, they are obtained from keeping yourself clean.'

Dr Charles Wilson, in his general Report on the Scottish Training Colleges, gives several curious answers which have been received from candidates and pupil-teachers. A young lady answering a question on insurance, wrote: 'The money is provided by the Company to defray the expenses of the birth of members in pecuniary distress.' A second demoiselle in commenting upon the proverb, 'Penny wise and pound foolish,' wrote in a mathematical sort of way, and it is feared with some degree of misanthropy: 'This proverb clearly shows that for every wise and good action a man does, he will commit two hundred and forty foolish bad ones.'

One pupil brought Julius Caesar before the public in the light of a wonderful inventor: 'Julius Caesar invented Great Britain, 55 B.C.'—by writing that, a suspicion exists that copying is still in vogue. What a disaster a single mistaken letter deservedly occasions to the young plagiarist! 'Ethelred the Unready was called that because he was never ready for the Danes. He used to entice them away from England by brideing them, but they used to come again and demand a larger bride.'

Poor William Rufus's end was sadder than we wist, if we are to believe a youth, who says that William Rufus was gorged to death by a stag in the forest his father had made to hunt the deer.' Another writes: 'Prince William was drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine: he never laughed again.'—A small biographer of the Maid of Orleans writes: 'Joan of Arc was the daughter of a rustic French pheasant which lived in the forest. . . . She did not like to leave her pheasant home, but after a while she went away.'—'In the rainy season,' says a little pedant, 'the barren desert becomes animated with torrents of luxuriant vegetation.' Before leaving the humours of boys, an oral question and answer may be given. 'What do you mean by a temperate region?' asked an inspector, with a due emphasis on the word temperate. A little boy replied: 'The region where they drink only temperants drinks, sir.'

Physical science is a dreadful stumbling-block to most youths. Asked to give the causes of sound, a sufferer wrote: 'Sound is caused by the motions of the air, and is carried about by the German band.' A curious dogmatiser, in 'explaining' the origin of a draught, says: 'A draught would be felt near the broken window of a warm room, because if you stood near it, you would feel it.'—A boy, who appeared to believe friction as something tangible, perhaps a sort of newfangled firelighter, scribbled: 'Friction is caused by the rubbing together of two sticks; it is very useful if you have not any matches.'—'What is a member?' asked an official.—'A man on the School Board,' was the answer.—A surname was thought to mean 'the name of a person you say sir to.'

In giving the names of the ten plagues, a respondent unduly enlarged the fourth, 'Plague of flies, beetles, and moskeeters;' whilst the murrain among beasts was written by another, 'Miriam among beasts.'

The following two were lately recorded in the *Schoolmaster*. A class had been asked to use the word dozen in a sentence of their own construction. One of the answers ran: 'I dozen

know what to do.'—'Stability' was ingeniously defined, perhaps by an unstable memory, as being 'the cleaning-up of a stable.'

As the science subjects of Physiology and Hygiene are making rapid strides in the elementary schools of this country, the following answers will illustrate to some extent the cramming system prevalent in these subjects. Here is what a young physiologist says: 'The food is nourished in the stomach. If you were to eat anything hard, you would not be able to digest it, and in consequence you would have what is called indigestion. Food is digested by the lungs; digestion is brought on by the lungs having something the matter with them. The food then passes through your windpipe to the pores, and then passes off your body by evaporation, through a lot of holes in your skin, called capillaries. The gall bladder throws off juice from the food, which passes through it. We call the kidneys the bread-basket, because it is where all the bread goes to. They lay up concealed by the heart.'

In reply to a question, 'Why do we cook our food?' one child replied: 'There are five ways of cooking potatoes. We should die if we eat our food raw.' A second pupil wrote: 'Food digested is when we put it into our mouths, our teeth chews it, and our mouth drops it down into our body. We should not eat so much bone making food as flesh making and warmth giving foods, for, if we did, we should have too many bones, and that would make us look funny.'

Dealing with ventilation, one student informs us that 'the thermometer is an instrument used to let out the heat when it is going to be cold.' Another writes, that a room should be kept at ninety in the winter by the fire, and in summer by a thermometer. A girl remarks: 'When roasting a piece of meat, put it in front of a brisk fire, so as to congratulate it.' Here is a very learned reply: 'Sugar is an amyloid; if you was to eat much sugar and nothing else, you would not live, because sugar has not got no carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen. Potatoes is another amyloids.'

In answer to the question, 'Mention any occupations that are injurious to health?' one reply was: 'Occupations which are injurious to health are carbonic acid gas, which is impure blood.' Another says: 'A stone-mason's work is injurious, because when he is chipping, he breathes in all the little chips, and they are taken into the lungs.' A third says: 'A bootmaker's trade is very injurious, because they press the boots against the thorax, and therefore it presses the thorax in, and it touches the heart, and if they do not die, they are cripples for life.'

In reply to a question on digestion, one child wrote: 'The food is swallowed by the windpipe, and the chyle passes up the middle of the backbone, and reaches the heart, when it meets with oxygen and is purified.' Another wrote: 'We should never eat fat, because the food does not digest.' A third says: 'The work of the heart is to repair the different organs, in about half a minute.' A fourth child says: 'We have an upper and a lower skin; the lower skin moves at its will; and the upper skin moves when we do.' A fifth Standard child says: 'The heart is a comical shaped bag.' Another in that class writes:

'The upper skin is called eppederby, and the lower is called derby.' While a third, giving the organs of digestion, writes, stomach, utensils [intestines], liver, and spleen.

PROOFS OF AGE.

SINCE the abolition of feudalism, the sovereign of England has had but little concern in ascertaining the age of any subject; but previously it was otherwise. Whilst feudalism held sway in this country, and the landed possessions of tenants holding of the Crown in chief were, during the minority of the holders, in the hands of the Crown, the sovereign had a direct interest in testing the accuracy of statements made by heirs as to their age when suing for 'livery' of their lands; hence the existence amongst the Public Records of the documents known as 'Proofs of Age.' The witnesses examined at the taking of these *probationes* always gave the reasons for their knowledge that the particular heir of whom they were speaking was born in a certain year, and, consequently, then of full age. It is from these reasons that we are enabled to cull material which renders this series of records of historic and social interest.

Let us take first a few of the 'proofs'—we must of course deal with a subject like this in the most cursory way—which record historic facts. In that taken as to the age of Gilbert, son and heir of Thomas de Clare, in 1302, one of the witnesses remembered the date of the heir's birth by the fact that on Monday after the feast of All-Saints, twenty-two years before—that is, in 1280—he (the witness) was at 'a certain conflict' between the English and Irish at Kildroyn, at which Robert le Butiller received a fatal wound; and that Gilbert was born on the morrow of the feast of the Purification following the battle. Again, in the inquiry, taken July 15, 1303, as to the age of Richard le Heriz, one witness states that the heir was born exactly twenty-one years previously (1282 A.D.); and in that year, 'after the feast of St Martin,' Llewellyn, Prince of Wales, 'was taken and slain.' At the inquiry as to the age of John, son and heir of Roger de Tychbourne, taken in 1358, various witnesses agree that he was born at Tychbourne on the vigil of the feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, in the eleventh year of the reign of the then king; and they knew this because on the feast of Saint Faith next following (1359 A.D.), the town of Southampton was burned by the king's enemies. In the year 1282, a witness, after stating that an heir had attained his majority, tells us that in the year before the heir's birth—namely, in 1260—there was 'a great scarcity of corn' throughout the country. These are a few of the very many really useful historic facts that are furnished by the Proofs of Age.

The incidents of social life illustrated by these inquiries are also curious. We learn from them

that, in early times, baptism was generally administered on the day of birth, or within two or three days afterwards. Towards the close of Edward I.'s reign, Richard, son and heir of Hugh le Heriz, of whom we have before spoken, was born on the feast of Holy Trinity, and baptised on the morrow of that feast; and in the year 1358, John, son and heir of Roger de Tychbourne—who, as we have seen, was born at Tychbourne—was baptised the same day at the church of that village. As years rolled on, the period between birth and baptism became gradually lengthened, till, in post-reformation times, we find quite a long period intervening. Still—even in Charles I.'s reign—the time was not so long as that often allowed to elapse in the present day. In a 'proof' taken in the year 1633, the jury found that the heir in question, Francis Petre, was born at 'Mauborough,' in the county of Wilts, on the 12th of December 1611, and baptised in the church of that town on the 23d of the same month. The particulars relating to the birth of the heir of whom a witness is speaking are sometimes given in the most minute detail. In the case of the Proof of Age of Francis de Skotland, an old witness, when questioned as to 'the place and day of birth of the said Francis,' answered that 'he was born at Worle, in the house of his father, on All-Saints' Day, twenty-one years ago, after dinner.'

The institution of parish registers in the reign of Henry VIII. ought to have prevented the necessity of taking verbal, and often, to modern ideas, very uncertain evidence as to the date of a birth; yet there is hardly an instance during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I., or Charles I., in which one of the authorised registers is mentioned as having been produced at the taking of a *probatio etatis*; though entries of a birth made in the most irregular places—in any book, or on any scrap of paper that happened to be at hand—were frequently put forward. One instance of this must suffice. Towards the close of Elizabeth's reign, a jury was convinced of the date of an heir's birth 'by a writing in a certain book' in the hand of his father in these words: Thomas Syngleton was, by 'Gode's helpe, boren the sixth daie of Marche 1568, beinge Sondaie, at the latter ende of eleven of the clocke at nighte.' In early times we often find a very quaint place selected for entering the record of a birth. As a rule, the Bible or Missal of the parish church was selected; but in the case of Peter, son and heir of John de Fortesbury, taken in 1309, an aged witness stated he remembered that the heir was twenty-two on the Feast of St Laurence then last past, because that day, twenty-two years before, was the eve of his (witness's) mother's second 'marriage'; or which day John de Fortesbury came to him, and besought him to put on record the day and year of the nativity of the same heir; and he immediately did so on the wall of his hall; and by this he knows the exact time.'

At the conclusion of one of these inquiries, the heir, when proved of full age, was sometimes provided with a wife. In the year 1299, in the case of a promising young Nottinghamshire squire, Thomas de Longvilliers, who had proved his age, one of the witnesses, 'questioned if the said heir is married, or not,' said: 'He is not.' The

King's Treasurer thereupon informed him 'that the lord the king offers him in marriage one of the daughters of Adam de Cretinges, deceased. And the same heir, having seen the daughters aforesaid, consents to marry the eldest of them. And because the same Thomas had sufficiently proved his age both by evidence of witnesses and by his personal appearance, and as he also assents to the marriage aforesaid, he has seized of the lands of his inheritance.'

Proofs of Age exist from the time of Henry III. down to the middle of Charles I.'s reign; and from almost any one we take up, a good deal that is of interest might be noted. But we must bring these jottings to a close with the following reference to what took place in a country parish church in England at the close of the thirteenth century, the church in question being that of Ayston, in Hertfordshire. Here, on the feast of St Nicholas, 1293, the heiress of a neighbouring squire, Brian de Brampton, was baptised. One witness saw her being baptised at the church door, whilst his own marriage was being celebrated at the altar; whilst another states that he 'buried his mother' on the same day in the churchyard of Ayston Church, and on returning from the funeral, he met the child's godmother carrying her to baptism.

GOOD-BYE.

Soft falls the moonlight's silvery rays,
Glistening the crest of the wavelets dancing;
Fair is the maid, by the shore, who strays,
Gladness and hope from her blue eyes glancing.
Now, she is nearing the trysting-tree,
Soon her true lover she's fondly greeting.
Little she thinks, as the moments flee,
This is to be their farewell meeting.
Sad would the heart be, oh, bitter the sigh,
Could we know when we're bidding a last good-bye.

No longer the moonbeams gild the tide;
Athwart the sky is the lightning gleaming;
The youth has sailed from his promised bride;
Safe in her home she is sweetly dreaming.
No dread forebodings disturb her sleep;
Peaceful, she rests on her snowy pillow;
Her love the while, where the surges sweep,
Lies cold and still 'neath the foaming billow.
Sad would the heart be, oh, bitter the sigh,
Could we know when we're bidding a last good-bye.

All through our lives we are dropping friends,
Bidding good-bye without thought of grieving,
And dark the shadow each parting lends
To the web of life we are deftly weaving.
In that land of light where no shadows rest,
Life's web complete, and our labours ended,
We shall find our lives had not been blest
Had the shadow ne'er with the sunshine blended.

Ah, grieve not, dear friend, heave no bitter sigh;
To the faithful and true there is no good-bye.
MAGGIE ROBERTSON.